The

Non-Subscribing Presbyterian

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Notes of the Month.

As these notes are written, the Coal Strike is profoundly affecting for ill the lives and labours of an increasing number of people. The general conveniences of life are already seriously curtailed and the resultant hardship is being ever more widely experienced. All classes of the community are realizing the disastrous possibilities if the strike be long continued. We therefore most fervently hope that the negotiations now proceeding between representatives of the Government and the miners may lead to a satisfactory settlement, so that there may speedily follow the normal conditions of industry and intercourse.

Apart from strikes and the unsettlement they involve, the question of unemployment is of serious import. Many industries show increasing falling off, and reduced hours are becoming all too familiar. This means the prospect of acute distress at the worst season of the year, made worse in this case by the still growing cost of the necessaries of life. The demands which all philanthropic agencies will have to meet will be correspondingly heavy, and we therefore hope that the well-to-do will make it possible for such agencies to do even more than their accustomed good work.

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In this time of unrest and industrial difficulty, the Christian Churches will find their opportunity of service. Not, as heretofore, will they be competing centres for the distribution of relief, but will fulfil their function as dynamic centres of power and comfort. In too many cases the physical ills of the community have their concomitants in spiritual decline and decadence. There are not wanting persons who feel that we are confronted by all the signs and portents of spiritual sickness. If that be so, and there is much that leads to the belief, the real hope of mankind is a revival of dynamic religious faith. Even the best designed plans of material relief will fail if they be not rooted in and prompted by the religious sanctions of love to God and love to man.

* *

How can the Churches make good their claim to be divinely ordained

instruments of religion? One means is the demonstration of their unity in the face of a hostile and sorely-distressed world. The phase of discussion must be succeeded by that of operation. In every quarter with practical unanimity speakers and writers representing the various Churches have welcomed the Lambeth Appeal. Quite recently it received most sympathetic consideration in the opening address at the Assembly's College in Belfast. So far so good. But surely it should now be possible for earnest religious people to get together and devise some means of demonstrating re-union. One actual successful experiment will do more to impress and convert the world than any number of eloquent expositions of its possibility and desirability.

* *

November 11th will be to many people a day of glad or sorrowful remembrance. Those who recall the cessation of hostilities on that day in 1918 and the lifting of the heavy burden of care and anxiety will not let it pass without fitting gratitude. Others to whom it suggests sad thoughts of relatives or friends who made the great surrender have our profound sympathy. But not any of us can so soon have forgotten that it marked the glad close of a period of intense and prolonged agony of mind and heart, and the second anniversary of a memorable date will not pass unnoted.

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Many thoughtful members of our Church should be interested in an article on "The Price of Progress," by Dr. Mellone, which received the place of honour in the last number of the "Hibbert Journal." It is characterised by wise thought and charming literary expression, and we who believe in progress, socially and religiously, will not be deterred in its pursuit by the recognition that now, as in the past, progress is bought with a price.

THE LAMBETH APPEAL.

Episcopalian Ordination.

An obituary notice in the "Northern Whig" stated: "It might be said of this man that not only was he a Presbyterian; but, he was a Christian"; which reminds us of the gentleman who said: "When I say religion, I mean Christianity, and when I say Christianity I mean the Church of England," which statement sums up very much the "Report of the Conference holden at Lambeth." Says the report: "God selected Israel to be His chosen people, and into that Israel, He sent His Son to found a new Israel," and thus the Anglican Communion is a selection of a selection, and the Lambeth Conference of 1920, evidently intended to take its place in the succession of the great historic councils of the Holy Catholic Apostolic Church, pronounces judgment, and bestows or withholds its blessing on movements secular or religious, to the extent that they comply with its requirements, and confirm its august claims of an unbroken episcopal succession, which carries with it territorial ecclesiastical jurisdiction and valid sacraments in their integrity and plenitude.

The weak point of their claim, in days gone by, has caused some of the Anglican clergy to join the Church of Rome, and it has been stated that in an Order of High Church Clergy (was it the Order of St. John?) provision had been made for the establishment and preservation of the true Apostolic succession. It was flattering to have the Greek Metropolitan as their guest, which certified that from his point of view Anglican Orders were alright; but the Church of Rome ignored their conferences as much as it would the Synod of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland. "They are outside the true Church, even though they imitate our ceremonies, and outside the Church there is no salvation." Rome maintains that the link with the historic

episcopate was broken at the Reformation, and the consecration of Archbishop Parker, through whom the present succession comes, was invalid. Another Church, concerning whose line of succession Rome admits: "They have retained valid orders," and which is friendly disposed towards the Anglican Communion, considers the question of Anglican orders "confused and ambiguous, and therefore difficult to estimate aright."

One would think that it behoved the Bishops themselves to be very chary about judging others lest they themselves also be judged.

Gladstone paid a strong tribute to Archbishop Laud for having asserted the claim of the Church of England to be a constituent part of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. Laud went twice to Scotland with King Charles and "found no religion at all"; no altars, no candles, no incenses, no vestments, no genuflexions, indeed no religion at all," as Carlyle remarked in his posthumous book, "Historical Sketches." Presbyterians may not like Laud; and his influence over Charles and his own tyrannical methods, adopted also by Stafford on the line of rule, brought the three of them to the scaffold; but, all the same, he was an able far-seeing man, and zealous to fanaticism for the prestige of his church. But, for him, the Church of England might have been Presbyterian, or approximately so, for one of the first things the Royalists did at the Restoration was to carry out Laud's intentions, and hence the ejection of 1662.

The revolt against Catholicism after James II. made such matters as Apostolic Succession and validity of sacraments of very vague importance. In the eighteenth century, deism became a prominent teaching, then arose the Wesley and Whitfield revival, and church polity was a secondary matter. The Tractarian movement under the leadership of Pusey brought the Catholicity of the Church to the fore once more, and men like Canon Liddon strongly advocated Anglican Catholicism. Broad Churchmen did not attach real importance to these points beyond that of their historical interest, and in some cases, like that of Dean Stanley, who said he was as much a Unitarian as Martineau, chafed at the restrictions placed upon free interchange with other denominations. Dean Stanley considered that the Presbyterian form approached the nearest to that of the Early Church. Students of Christian origins admit that they are faced with a paucity of material. The zeal of the orthodox in early days obliterated as far as possible all traces of anything which might be used to confute the position in which they had entrenched themselves.

"The history of the Church is the history of the Episcopate," declared the Roman Catholic preacher at the St. Patrick celebration in Belfast. Is it? The Roman Catholic traces his Episcopate to St. Peter as first Bishop of Rome, and the Bishop of Rome has universal jurisdiction. But he has a hard nut to crack, when he comes up against the Greek Church. Protestant Episcopalians, while admitting the Bishop of Rome to be the Patriarch of the West, refuse to acknowledge his Patriarchate to have any priority over other Patriarchates. Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Alexandria, Constantinople, were all centres on an equality with Rome; but Rome being Rome made stupendous claims in course of time. Bishop in the early days of the Church was synonymous with Presbyter. According to Irenæus Linus (2 Tim. iv. 21) was the first Bishop of Rome; probably only Presbyter. Clemens, named as third Bishop, never refers to himself as such. Victor (190 A.D.) was the first to assume the title "Episcopus Episcoporum."

The problem we have to solve is, if the sacraments really are what the Anglican Bishops now claim for them, and the Churches in communion with the ancient Patriarchal sees, including Rome, have long claimed as indissolubly bound up with Holy Orders of

the three grades of Deacon, Priest and Bishop; when was this first established? Cardinal Newman (was it?) claimed that the Church's tradition was, that during the time between the Resurrection and the Ascension, Christ Himself organised the order of the Church. A Gnostic Gospel says much the same thing, though the interval may have been forty years instead of forty days, for in the eleventh year after the Resurrection, Christ had only instructed his disciples up to the regions of the first mystery, the mystery within the veil, and then proceeded to initiate them into the further treasures of light, telling them that "that which is beyond all mysteries is all evolution and all involution; because of it, all mysteries exist and all their regions." If there were mysteries such as Masonry witnesses to, in the Early Church, then however democratic the outer church might have been, the order of the inner church was hierarchical. But this did not last three centuries, and to this day evokes antagonism. The term "mysteries" is now applied to the Sacraments only. A gift is said to be conferred by ordination and in fuller measure by the consecration of a bishop. This is explained as a process of linking the soul of the candidates in a special manner with that of Christ, so that a priest, to use a Catholic term, becomes "minor Christ." Sacraments must consist of three parts: a word of power; a sign, seal or sigil, and some physical material, e.g., water for baptism, oil for unction or healing, ashes for penitence, ring in marriage, bread and wine for eucharist, &c. A deacon has a certain power bestowed upon him, a priest has a fuller power, and a bishop a fuller power still. All this, we are told by Catholics, is preserved and handed down by Episcopalian ordination. Officially the Church of England only calls two of these sacraments; judging from the report "Holy Unction or healing will soon be another, and no doubt High Churchmen may use the whole number. Enough has been written to give a hint as to the reason for insisting upon Episcopalian Ordination before permitting a minister to serve at an Anglican altar.

Orders of some other Episcopal churches were examined. Sweden satisfies, not because it is Lutheran, but Episcopal. Lutheran churches, including Luther's own, without Episcopacy, don't count. The Moravians haven't been careful enough about their Episcopacy, so if they like, the Anglicans will put it right for them. "They actually allowed a deacon to administer the Eucharist." The Archbishop of Canterbury some years ago had a sharp word to say to the Archbishop of Utrecht, for consecrating an Archbishop of the Old Catholic Church, for Great Britain and Ireland. It would seem that the late Rev. A. H. Mathew, D.D., de jure Earl of Llandaff and Thomastown, was consecrated at Utrecht in 1908. In 1915 Dr. Mathew repudiated Old Catholicism and offered his submission to the Roman Obedience, died 1919. Formerly priest in Roman Catholic Orders, Auxiliary Bishops were consecrated before his retirement "to safeguard the succession." The Archbishop of Utrecht had to explain to Canterbury, and evidently was embarrassed. He referred to a document filled up by Dr. Mathew, presumably setting forth that there was no Church in Great Britain and Ireland, which precisely fulfilled the purpose of the Old Catholic Church. After hearing from Canterbury, Utrecht said he had been misinformed, and wouldn't recognise the new British Church. But too late! The consecration had taken place, and all the mystic powers pertaining thereto had been passed on. Utrecht should have taken better care. Now none can challenge the succession, although the Anglican Bishops say they will not recognise it in practice, although the Orders are better than their own. The old man is not alive now to answer for himself; but a peer of the realm may be assumed to have acted with honourable intentions. Evidently to keep Utrecht right with Canterbury, a conference in 1920 in Holland declared Mathew to have acted fraudulently;

such action is like whipping a dead horse. In 1915-16, this Church in Britain underwent a complete re-organisation, and dropped the title "Old Catholic," for "Liberal Catholic," as the religious and doctrinal outlook is not that of the Old Catholic Church, though it looks to Utrecht as the Mother-see. "Drat the brat, which it isn't mine!"

ULLIN.

PORTRAIT OF FRANCIS DALZELL FINLAY.

ALL SOULS' CHURCH, BELFAST.

At the bi-centenary celebrations of the erection of the Second Congregation of Protestant Dissenters in Belfast, held in 1908, it was decided to form an Historical Collection of Pictures, Portraits Manuscripts and other objects illustrating the history of the congregation during the past two centuries. The importance of such a collection cannot be over-estimated, as the various members of the congregation contributed largely, in their respective spheres of life, to the development and growth of the city, both commercially and intellectually.

The most recent acquisition is a Portrait in Oil of Francis Dalzell Finlay, which has kindly been presented by Josias Cunningham, Esq., to whom the Committee of All Souls' Church has tendered their sincere thanks. The painter of the portrait is not known, but it probably is the work of Richard Rothwell, R.H.A. (1800-1868) who was a brother-in-law of Rev. John Scott Porter, and who exhibited in the Royal Academy in 1851 a portrait of James Simms, Editor of "Northern Whig" and afterwards became proprietor of "Belfast Mercury."

Finlay, or "Old Frank," as he was popularly called, was a devoted member of the Second Congregation during the ministry of the Rev. John Porter, to whom he was distantly connected by marriage, having married a daughter of Rev. William Porter, Newtownlimavady. Born 12th July, 1793, Frank was the son of a small farmer in Ards, and afterwards became apprenticed to the Belfast printer and publisher, Samuel Archer, High Street. At the age of 21, he established a printing office in Joy's Court, in what was formerly the Belfast "News-Letter" Office, and his first printed work was "Fugitive Pieces in Verse and Prose," by Dr. Drennan, which was published in March, 1815. In 1824 he started "The Northern Whig," and conducted that organ of liberalism till his death in 1857.

Shortly after the formation of "The Northern Whig," Finlay appeared before Baron M'Clelland as defendant in a libel action, which was tried in Carrickfergus Courthouse, during the Summer Assizes of 1826. He was found guilty and sentenced to three months' imprisonment, without the option of a fine, and during his term of imprisonment "The Northern Whig" was not published. Four years after his liberation, another action for libel was started in connection with three articles which he published on the Hertford extortion of tenants. Dan O'Connell was retained for the defence, and when Dr. Montgomery and Finlay met him at Downpatrick, O'Connell said: "My Church is so indebted to "The Northern Whig' for what it has done in the cause of toleration that I will act as your counsel on one condition—and that is that I accept your brief without a fee." Th action, however, was ultimately abandoned.

As a stern and uncompromising Unitarian, Finlay threw his whole energy into the passing of the Dissenters' Chapels Bill, 1844. The columns of "The Northern Whig" were opened to the advocacy of the measure, which was regarded as a Christian, and not as a sectarian right and liberty. After the Royal Assent had been given to the Bill, Finlay was presented with a Silver

Salver and Dinner Service by a Joint Committee of the First and Second Congregations, and with an Address on behalf of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterians of Ireland.

THE UNION FOR SOCIAL SERVICE.

Somewhat disappointed, but not dismayed, with the result of the first full year's work, the Social Service Union ventures to ask the support of all the members of our Church in the work of the present Session. The Committee has not felt itself justified in arranging so important a series of Public Lectures as that of last Session, feeling that it is hardly fair to ask able and busy lecturers to come where even a moderate audience cannot be guaranteed. Accordingly, it has limited itself to one Public Lecture this year, which it trusts will be well attended, since the Lecturer is to be that first-rate authority on Social and Economic Subjects, Professor H. O. Meredith, of Queen's University, who will speak on the opportunities at hand of acquiring knowledge on Social Questions and doing useful social work. The Lecture will be held in the Central Hall, on Friday, 5th November, at 7-30 p.m.

It is generally agreed that the most successful way of acquiring anything like a sound and detailed knowledge of social problems is by means of the study circle. The Hon. Secretary (Rev. E. H. Pickering) is anxious to start a study circle for those in the neighbourhood of Belfast. The first meeting, at which dates of future meetings, modes of procedure, etc., will be fixed, will be held in the Central Hall, on Wednesday, 3rd November, at 7-30 p.m. The first subject of study suggested is the Archbishop's Report (1919), on "Christianity and Industrial Problems," which is a most sensational document considering the standing of the men composing the Committee, for it contains certain wide-reaching suggestions of the greatest possible importance for making Christian principles the basis of our industrial life. Will those who wish to join the circle send in their names to the Hon. Secretary, or in any case, attend the preliminary meeting on November 3rd?

ERNEST H. PICKERING, Hon. Sec.,
N.S.P.C.I. Union for Social Service.
44 Marlborough Park S.,
Belfast.

NOTES ON MESOPOTAMIA AND THE PERSIAN GULF.

Mesopotamia derives its name from two Greek words which mean "between two rivers." These rivers are the Euphrates and the Tigris, both of which have their source in the high tableland of Armenia. The country may be divided into Upper and Lower Mesopotamia, the former, broadly speaking, being the land north of Baghdad, and the latter the exceedingly fertile country enclosed by the rivers south of Baghdad. This land in times past was the granary for ancient empires, being irrigated in a way which still stirs the admiration of experts. With modern irrigation and railway schemes it may again become one of the richest grain-producing countries in the world.

The modern town of Kurna lies at the junction of the two rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates. Here, according to Arab tradition, is the site of the "Garden of Eden" and the "Tree of Knowledge." What the foundation of this tradition is no one can tell, for less than three thousand years ago the head of the Persian Gulf stretched north of the present town. There is little doubt, however, that the story itself is one that has been handed down from the earliest known inhabitants of Meso-

potamia, the Sumerians. The people of Sumen lived and prospered in this land 4,000 before the birth of Christ. The key to their wedge-shaped writing was only discovered a few years ago, but in spite of the fact that so few of their towns and villages (the Tels of Iraq) have been excavated, we already have some knowledge of them as the inventors of one of the first known systems of writing, of banking, of currency, and of weights and measures. They, too, were the pioneers of civilisation in astronomy, in religion and in orderly government. The Semetic tribes of the great Arabian desert had long been accustomed to trade with the Sumerian ports of Ur and Erech, close to the modern towns of Nasrie and Samawa, but famine and excess of population drove them to emigrate in large numbers to what they knew was a fertile land. A thousand years later (2400 B.C.) came the second migration, and with it the complete subjection of Mesopotamia. These Arab wanderers seem quickly to have absorbed all that was best in the Sumerian civilisation, keeping at the same time their own national vigour. From the wedge-shaped writing on clay tablets, which they adopted from their subjects, it seems clear that the greatest of their kings was called Hammurabi, mentioned in Genesis under the name of Amraphael, the friend of Abraham, and the first of the world's great lawgivers.

Inscriptions exist dating from this period, which give somewhat similar accounts of the Creation and the Great Flood to those in the Old Testament. It has been lately pointed out that the period of the Deluge is exactly that of the flood-time of the Tigris and Euphrates, and that even in historic times an excessive rainfall has resulted in inundations of the whole of Mesopotamia.

With the second migration of the Semites the family of Abraham evidently settled at Ur, near Nasrie. Thence during the time of Hammurabi (2200, 2100 B.C.). According to the account in Genesis, Abraham travelled due north through Mesopotamia to Haran; later proceeding with his whole clan, via Canaan into Egypt. Somewhere about this period Babylon came under Hammurabi whose name is still found stamped on the lowest strata of its baked bricks. During the following 1,000 years, the country seems to have been over-run by a series of invasions, this time from the East. The foothills, which may be dimly seen from Amara, were the home of the Kassites, a vigorous hill race who seem to have introduced the horse into this country. But they in turn were overthrown and incorporated in the Kingdom of Assyria. The Assyrians, formerly members of the second Semetic migration, had established themselves in Northern Mesopotamia, and in 1150 B.C. they were already masters of a huge empire, extending from Persia in the East, over Asia Minor and Syria and even Egypt in the West. Their famous capital of Nineveh was situated close to the modern Mosul.

Three Assyrian empires rose and fell before Babylon once more came into prominence under Nebuchadnezzar. About 600 B.C. he deported the remaining Israelites from Canaan and settled them in Mesopotamia, where their descendants are still very numerous, especially along the Euphrates below Babylon. From the psalms, which they composed by the waters of Babylon, it seems that in their appreciation of the country, and in their longing to get back home, they differed little from their British successors to-day. Somewhere among the extensive ruins of the great capital lie the sites of the lions' den, the fiery furnace, and the house with its window set towards Jerusalem.

In 539 B.C. this country was once more invaded by Cyrus, the king of Persia. Under him Mesopotamia became a Persian province. Herodotus, the great Greek historian and traveller, tells of the difficulty which Cyrus had in crossing the Diyaleh river and how, to revenge the death of one of his sacred white horses, which was swept away by the current, he threatened to break its strength so that in future it could be crossed quite easily.

Under Cyrus and Xerxes, the Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem, and both Ezra and Nehemiah led parties of their countrymen home from Babylon. It is possible that there is some truth in the Arab tradition which places the tomb of Ezra on the right bank of the Tigris between Amara and Kurna. About that time Esther, Mordecai and Nehemiah were all members of the royal Persian household at Shushan. The ruins of this city lie in the hills above Ahwaz and the book of Esther give an excellent picture of the prosperity of the contemporary Jewish community in Mesopotamia. Persian ascendancy lasted up to the year 333 B.C., when the Greeks crossed into Asia Minor under Alexander the Great, conquered Mesopotamia, and even penetrated into India.

In 237 B.C. the Parthians from Central Asia swept over the country once more, this time across the river to Ctesiphon on the Tigris, opposite Selencia. The new city flourished for 800 years under the Sassinads, a Persian dynasty, until 642 A.D. the Moslems over-ran the country, in what was the fourth and last of the great Semetic invasions, and founded the modern city of Baghdad. In 629 A.D. abnormal floods partly destroyed the ancient irrigation system of the country, and not until a few years ago was any attempt made to re-construct them.

Under the new Moslem regime, Baghdad quickly became famous, not merely as a capital of fabulous wealth, but as a seat of learning and as a home of one of the greatest universities of the middle ages. Most of the tales of the Arabian Nights centre round this city. They tell how from his home in Baghdad Sinbad the Sailor would set forth on a horse or a camel to the great port of Balsorah, in order to take ship for the mysterious islands of the Persian Gulf. Balsorah is the old Basra of to-day, which lies halfway between Zobier and the modern Basra and which 1,000 years ago was a flourishing seaport.

Muhammad had planned that his successors, the Khalifs, should be elected from his own tribe and rule the Moslem Empire from Mecca. Two of his disciples, however, disputed the succession. Ali, a son-in-law, was supported in his claim by the Moslems of Mesopotamia, but the disciple, Omar, with the support of Damascus, defeated him and drove him into Persia. There Ali adopted the title of Imam, and founded the Shia Sect of Muhammadanism. The followers of Omar, who form the Sunni Sect, established an empire stretching right along the coast of Africa into Spain, but they, in their turn, were defeated by the Shias in the 8th century, under the Abbasid Mansur, who reconquered Mesopotamia and founded in 763 A.D. as the capital of the Muhammadan Empire, the modern city of Baghdad. Here the Abbasid Khalifs ruled for five centuries until 1258 A.D. They were overthrown by the Mongols under Hulaga Khan. Three centuries later the Turks, who are Sunnis, under the leadership of Suliman the Magnificent, Sultan of Constantinople, established themselves in Baghdad, and in 1534 Mesopotamia became part of the Turkish Empire.

The little that remains of old Baghdad on the west bank is typically Persian. It was largely copied from the old Persian capital of Ctesiphon, and is monopolised by the Shia Sect to-day. Under the Abassid Khalifs all the Viziers, or Prime Ministers, were Persians from Khalid Mansur's Vizier to Jaffar, who used to accompany his famous master, Haroun al Raschid, in his wanderings through the Bazaars of Baghdad. There, dressed as a beggar, he was able to study first hand his subjects' opinion of their ruler. The city on the east bank is typically Arab. It contains the principal bazaars, and all the Sunni Mosques and tombs, besides the palaces of the later Khalifs.

Of special interest are the Khan Othma, a 12th century building, which contains some fine carvings, the Turkish custom-house, which in 1233 was a flourishing college, and the reputed tomb of Sitt Zobeidar, the wife of Haroun al Raschid. The whole town

on the west side used to be surrounded by a semi-circular wall and a moat, the ruins of which may still be seen.

The Turks, since 1534, have never managed either to control or civilize the river Arab and the wandering Bedouin. Except under one or two exceptional men, like Nazim Pasha, who was too good a ruler to live long under the Turk's law, justice or security of property and life have never been established. The yearly allowance for sanitary purposes in Baghdad in pre-war days was thirty-two shillings. It is, therefore, not surprising that in 1832 out of a population of 150,000 in the city, 60,000 died of plague. With the entry of the British into Baghdad in March, 1917 commenced another chapter in the history of Mesopotamia. A new and greater age has been ushered in.

J.H.S.

LESSON NOTES FOR TEACHERS.

[To be used in accordanee with the Scheme of instruction for 1920, issued by the Sunday School Committee of the N.S P.C.I.]

November 7th. David again spares Saul. 1 Samuel xxvi.

In the opinion of many biblical scholars this chapter is but another version of the incident recorded in chapter xxiv. There are many striking resemblances between the two narratives, and it is singular that neither David nor Saul make any reference to David's having spared Saul's life before. This affords an excellent illustration of the methods of Old Testament historians, and should be so used with elder scholars as a help to understanding how the Bible was written.

Taking this chapter on its own merits (and it is held to be the more reliable account of the two) we may notice that practically a state of war existed between Saul and David. Saul came out with an armed force against David, and David sent out spies to keep watch on Saul's movements. When David found Saul at his mercy, owing to the carelessness of the guard, it seemed only natural that he should take advantage of the opportunity to rid himself of his enemy. This was suggested to David by Abishai, but in spite of his own danger and the fact that he was to be the next king he refused to "put forth his hand against the Lord's anointed." In verse 10 there is a foreshadowing of St. Paul's teaching, "Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."

Between the two accounts of David sparing Saul's life we have the story of Abigail. When David was enraged at the insults of Nabal and was about to return evil for evil, Abigail had kept him from bloodguiltiness and from avenging himself. He now acts in the same spirit towards Saul. The magnanimity of David did not secure safety for himself, but it was worth while for its own sake, and if, as is not improbable, he twice spared Saul s life this emphasises the lesson that the returning of good for evil must proceed from goodness of heart and loyalty to God and not from expediency.

November 14th. The Death of Saul. 1 Samuel xxxi.

Saul was a gallant soldier but a poor king. Not being able to rule himself he was not fitted to rule others. His jealousy and his violent temper had made it impossible for David to remain with him, and the state of his country and the strength of his enemies was such that he could ill afford the loss of so capable a general. The storm clouds gathered about Saul, and in his despair he turned to the Witch of Endor only to hear the doom pronounced, "To-morrow you and your sons shall fall. Now the fateful day had dawned. Saul held a strong position on Mount Gilboa, and if he could retain it he would be able to thwart the Philistines. But his army was not large enough for the task. How useful would David have been at this moment, but he was far away engaged against the Amalekites. The Philistines attacked in over-

whelming force, and the Israelites fled. Three of Saul's sons were slain and the king himself was sorely pressed. At last he is wounded by the archers and there is no hope of escape. Rather than be taken prisoner to be humiliated, as Samson had been, by the fierce Philistines he bids his armour-bearer slay him. But the armour-bearer would not, for he was afraid. Then Saul took his sword and fell upon it.

Saul had many faults, he lacked self-control, he was jealous, headstrong and passionate, but he was a man of fine courage, and in spite of his failings won the respect of men. The inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead, remembering how Saul had befriended them, risked their lives to bring back Saul's body and the bodies of his sons from the walls of Beth-shan and give them honourable burial. David lamented with a sincere sorrow :

> Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives,
> And in their death they were not divided ;
> They were swifter than eagles,
> They were stronger than lions.
> How are the mighty fallen.

November 21st. David and the Temple. 2 Samuel, vii.

For some time after the death of Saul there was civil war. Though David was again anointed king only the house of Judah acknowledged him at first. Abner, captain of Saul's host, made Ishbaal, a son of Saul, king over the rest of Israel, and there was long war between the house of David and the house of Saul ; and David waxed stronger and stronger, but the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker. At last the civil war ended in complete victory for David and all Israel came under his rule. Jerusalem is captured by David, and is called the City of David, it is henceforth the capital of the kingdom. The now united kingdom is able to withstand the attacks of the Philistines and a period of peace and prosperity follows. David now plans the building of a temple. Up to this time, owing to the unsettled state of the country, no temple had been built, and the tabernacle which had served during the wanderings in the wilderness was still the centre of Jewish worship. The king who had been so scrupulous in his loyalty to the Lord's anointed was also anxious to build a temple as soon as it was possible. He consulted Nathan, the prophet, and the point of the prophet's reply is that the king who desired to build a house for God should have his house established. Elsewhere, but not in this chapter, we are told that David was forbidden to build the temple because he was a man of war. The lesson of this chapter is one again and again repeated in the Old Testament, namely, that the God-fearing and God-considering man is assured of divine support.

It is usually in times of distress that people turn their thoughts to God, it is one of the characteristics that made David a man after God's own heart that he was mindful of God in his days of prosperity.

November 28th. David and Absalom. Absalom was the third son of David. To avenge the outrage on his sister he compassed the death of his half-brother, Ammon, and was obliged to take refuge from David's wrath. But the king's heart was towards Absalom and he was brought back from exile, and after two years was completely reconciled with his father. Absalom was a truly princely figure, " In all Israel there was none to be so much praised for his beauty." He was ambitious as well as beautiful, and after providing himself with a bodyguard began to win the goodwill of the people and plan a revolt. He was assisted by Ahithophel and succeeded in capturing Jerusalem. David and his followers fled before him. Hushai, David's friend, joined Absalom in order to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel, with the result that Ahithophel committed suicide. A rally to David enabled him to send a formidable force to meet Absalom ; the rebellion was crushed and Absalom slain.

Absalom is the prodigal son of the Old Testament. David loved him throughout

in spite of his unfilial conduct. When Absalom had vexed David by taking upon himself the punishment of Ammon "the king's heart was towards Abaslom," and when the rebellion was at its height and David sent forth his army to put it down his affection for his wayward son finds expression in his instructions to his generals, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom." Joab, no doubt from patriotic motives, disobeys these instructions and Absalom is slain. When the news is brought to the king sorrow for his son completely overshadows all thought of the quelled rebellion; he is a father first, a monarch second, his own and his people's safety are as nothing to the loss of his son. "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom, would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son."

The story of Absalom with its deep and tender pathos helps to complete the picture of David, poet and musician, general and statesman, a dutiful son, a loyal subject, a faithful friend, a wise ruler and an affectionate father; he had grave faults but was sound at the core, and because he knew how to love and to forgive he was a man after God's own heart.

Reports.

Unity Guild.—The opening meeting of the Unity Guild for this Session was held in the Central Hall, Belfast, on Wednesday evening, the 13th October. The guests were received on their arrival by the President and Mrs. E. R. Jackson, and the attendance, which was over 100 of members and friends, was very gratifying. The first part of the entertainment took the form of an Advertisement Tea, and it was entered into with much spirit. The first prize for guessing the largest number of advertisements was awarded to Mr. H. M'Cullough and the second prize to Miss Maisie Martin. The remainder of the evening was devoted to dancing, the music for which was supplied by Guild members and their friends and had much to do with the success and enjoyment of the evening. The next meeting will be held in the Central Hall on Wednesday, November 10th, at 7-30 p.m., when Mr. J. H. Smith will give a lecture-concert on Handel.

* *

Banbridge.—Harvest Thanksgiving Services were held in the First Presbyterian Church on Sunday, 17th October. At the evening service, the church was full to overflowing. As hitherto this beautiful church was handsomely decorated with harvest gifts; the ladies and young people busying themselves for four evenings courageously doing their best to even surpass previous efforts. The text in large old English gold-lettering on a dark blue background fringed with corn, dahlias and red berries was displayed around the entire front of the gallery; the pillars were bedecked in spiral with corn; the pulpit front exhibiting flowers, fruit, vegetables, and handsome pot plants; and many another most pleasing feature. The entire scheme showed the artistic taste possessed and industry displayed by the band of willing workers. The music, under the direction of the talented organist, Miss Dornan, was of the usual high order; and both organist and choir deserve high commendation. The Misses Helen Stevenson and Selina Shanks, Messrs. Mooney and Adamson most happily sang solo parts in the anthems "Lord of the Harvest" and "Is it not wheat harvest?" The minister preached at both services before very appreciative congregations, his texts being 1 Cor. xv. 37 in the morning and 1 Cor. iii. 9 at night.

On the following Monday night before a good congregation the Rev. G. J. Slipper conducted the service. His appropriate harvest address, on the seed growing secretly (Mark iv. 26 ff.) was worthy of the occasion. At this service further solos "He wipes the tear from every eye" and "Come

unto Me," were splendidly rendered by Miss M'Carthy and Mr. Foster. The choir was augmented for the occasion by the most helpful and willing assistance, apart from those already named, of Mrs. M'Cammond, the Misses Jardin and Moore, and Mr. Simms.

The young people have started Club meetings this month. For suggesting a name for the Club which by vote would prove most popular, Master Hugh Brown won a prize for the title, "The Dunbar Memorial Club," so henceforth it shall be known as such. The most popular event was the opening social when about forty present enjoyed the social delights of tea (provided by the young ladies), round games, songs and last (but by no means least) three or four dances. It was a most successful evening. At the next meeting, with a little under half the previous attendance the members indulged in the exhilarating art of debate when many matters of burning interest were freely discussed. This Club promises to be most helpful to the young people by its social advantages and as a link to the Church. The officers are: Secretary, Mr. W. J. Radcliffe; treasurer, Mr. Jos. M'Keown, and the Minister as Chairman.

* *

Belfast: Domestic Mission.—The first of our monthly musical services was held on Sunday evening, September 19th. The attendance was very gratifying, and the collection equally good, the latter being in aid of the Choir Music Fund. The special soloist was Miss Kathleen Murray, while two anthems were rendered by the Mission Choir.

Our winter activities were entered upon on Monday, October 4th, when the Mothers' Meeting took place. The attendance was good, and in this connection many happy and useful hours are hoped for.

In the evening the Boys' Club opened. Officers for the year were appointed and a programme of activity entered upon.

It is hoped to open the Girls' Guild at the end of the month. This will be conducted under the auspices of the Social Service Union Girls' Guild, the Mission having equal representation on its Committee.

On Wednesday, October 6th, the week-night services were opened, when the Rev. H. J. Rossington, M.A., B.D., kindly conducted the service and delivered a very appreciative address.

On the following evening, in connection with the "Rest Hour" for the adult members and friends of the Mission, the opening "Drawing Room" Party took place. The attendance far exceeded our highest hopes, there being fully 120 persons present. A very appreciative and enjoyable musical programme was contributed to by Miss Kathleen Murray, Rev. M. Watkins, Mr. W. Cochrane, and the Missionary. Light refreshments were provided during the evening. A distinctly successful effort, largely due to the able manner in which our energetic young people banded themselves together to undertake the catering and general arrangements, was brought to an all too early conclusion by the National Anthem, pronounced as a Benediction by the Missionary, all standing.

Harvest Thanksgiving Services are arranged to take place on Sunday, October 24th.

* *

Belfast: York Street.—Harvest Thanksgiving Services were held on Sunday, October 17th, when owing to the recent congregational revival, an additional touch of real significance was felt by all in the great success of the whole three services. The church was very beautifully decorated, while abundant gifts of fruit and vegetables lined the vestibule and stairs. In the morning and afternoon there were good congregations, and at the evening service the church was quite full. The two former services were taken by the Minister, and the latter by the Rev. J. A. Kelly, whose helpful prayers

and inspiring address will long be remembered by all who are keenly interested in the welfare of York Street. The musical part of the services, conducted by the newly-appointed organist (Mr. Clement Leath) reflected more than a little credit upon him, and his own choir, illustrating once again the magic of human endeavour. Throughout the day the choir was augmented by several ladies and gentlemen belonging to other churches and for whose presence and help we are very grateful. All gifts of fruit and vegetables were sold by auction the following evening for the benefit of church funds.

* *

Cairncastle.—The Harvest Thanksgiving Services were held on Sunday afternoon, October 17th, at 4 o'clock, and Monday evening, October 18th, at 7-30 o'clock. The church was, as usual, most beautifully decorated, and one wondered where all the bright flowers and berries came from this very wet season, for there were as many as in previous fine years. Rev. J. A. Miskimmin, B.A., of Glenarm, was the preacher on Sunday, and the minister, Rev. E. Thompson, on Monday. Special harvest music and hymns were sung by the choir, the anthem being "Oh give thanks unto the Lord," by Rev. E. Vine Hall, and the carol, "Now that the harvest is gathered and stored," by H. G. Trembath. The solos were taken by Miss May Buchanan and Miss Mary Annie M'Clure, Mrs. Thompson played the organ. On Monday a special harvest service of praise and prayer compiled and arranged by Rev. W. Copeland Bowie and J. Westwood Tosh, was used, the children of the Sunday School singing out well in their anthem in the service.

* *

Downpatrick.—Downpatrick Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church's Harvest Festival on Sunday, 26th September, was attended by very large congregations. The grand old church looked admirable in its festive garb, thanks to the generous gifts of many members and friends and the enthusiastic efforts of a willing band of workers. The preacher for the day was the Rev. E. I. Fripp, B.A., formerly of All Souls', Belfast, and now of Manchester. Mr. Fripp is a minister of considerable literary distinction. He has an article on Shakespeare in the current number of the "Hibbert Journal," and it was natural, therefore, that his sermons were excellent in matter and style. In the morning he emphasised "God in nature and God in man," while in the evening he spoke of "God as the shepherd leading His flock through the green and fertile pastures." Mrs. Tom Pickering (Madame Bella Ewen), now well known to Downpatrick audiences and ever popular, was the soloist for the day; she rendered "But the Lord is mindful of His own" and "Nearer my God to Thee" in a rich, full voice, and gave much pleasure to all. The accompaniments were played by Miss Laura Cochrane.

* *

Dromore. — The Harvest Thanksgiving Festival in connection with this Church was held on a recent Sunday, and was attended by large congregations both morning and evening. The church was tastefully decorated with flowers, plants, wheat and corn, while there was an abundant supply of vegetables, fruit, etc., which gave the interior of the church a picturesquely seasonable appearance, and reflected much credit on the ladies of the church. Special attention had been given to the pulpit, which presented a picture glowing with colour and full of sumptuousness and beauty of the season. The special preacher for the occasion was the Rev. Percival Godding, of Banbridge, a young and able minister, who preached eloquent, forceful and distinctively harvest sermons both morning and evening. The praise portion of the service was admirably sustained by the choir (under the capable conductorship of Mrs. Ruddock, organist). Special hymns and the anthems, "His Promise True," and "Praise the Lord, O my Soul," were splendidly rendered. A solo by Mr. David Ervine, Belfast, was

sung with much acceptance. The collections, which were special and in aid of church funds, met with a liberal response, and were taken up by the young men of the congregation.

* *

Killinchy. — Harvest Thanksgiving Services were held under favourable conditions on September 26th and 27th. Large congregations assembled twice on Sunday, when the Rev. H. J. Rossington, M.A., was the preacher. He also gave the address on Monday evening. His services were highly appreciated and warm thanks are due to him for his efforts. The decorations were arranged very tastefully, there being an abundance of beautiful flowers, fruit, and the year's harvest. The choir rendered special music for the occasion, consisting of harvest hymns and a special anthem. Thanks are due to the ladies who worked so hard and to such good effect, and to all who contributed to make the festival a success. The collections were good, amounting to £17 14s. 8d.

* *

Mountpottinger.—On Friday evening, September 24th, there was a large attendance at a Social Evening arranged for the purpose of taking a formal farewell of Mr. and Mrs. Blakely Kennedy and their two daughters, who by the time these lines appear in print will have left Belfast en route for Australia, where the family intends settling. After tea had been served under the supervision of Mrs. M'Cullough and Mrs. Jackson, the chair was taken by Rev. M. Watkins, who voiced the sentiments of all present when he said how much the impending departure was regretted by the congregation as it meant we were losing in Mr. Kennedy one who had been a member of the Church from its earliest days, whilst Mrs. Kennedy had rendered invaluable aid in connection with many a sale of work and Miss Martha had for a goodly period done excellent work for the Sunday School and allied institutions. He called upon Mr. E. R. Jackson as Hon. Treasurer of the Church to make a presentation of certain useful articles to the family as a whole and a special extra gift for Miss Martha in recognition of the services above-mentioned. In so doing Mr. Jackson referred to Mr. Kennedy's unswerving loyalty to the Unitarian name, and expressed the hope that although he would be several thousands of miles away he would yet maintain that loyalty to the end. On rising to respond, Mr. Kennedy, who was evidently deeply moved, assured his hearers that there would be no doubt on this point, and stated that it was his intention to keep on the stipend list. Following on this pleasant ceremony a short musical programme was rendered, to which songs were contributed by Mrs. J. Allen, Messrs. J. Russell, W. W. Wilson and Rev. M. Watkins. Mrs. L. W. M. Hay and Mr. J. Russell acted as accompanists, and Mr. Kennedy gave due evidence of his ability as a reciter. A charade (Australia) in which the guests of the evening and several friends took part, caused no inconsiderable amount of amusement. As the gathering took place on one of the nights when "Curfew" was not in force, the young people remained behind for a short dance to complete the programme.

* *

Moneyrea.—Harvest Thanksgiving Services were held on Sunday, October 10th, conducted by Rev. A. Davison, of Dromore, who preached appropriate and inspiring sermons to good congregations. The church had been tastefully decorated and the effect was very pleasing. The choir rendered the anthem "Consider the Lilies." The services were continued on Monday, October 11th, conducted by the minister. Our collections were considerably in advance of previous years, and the numerous gifts of fruit, vegetables, eggs, etc., were forwarded to the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast.

* *

Roughfort.—A Harvest Service of Song was rendered in the Roughfort Schoolroom on Sunday evening, 26th September. The service was principally choral. Under the supervision of Miss Getty the young people of the Templepatrick Congregation were specially trained for the occasion, and gave very

creditably the service which finds a place in the Essex Hall Tune Book. In addition to the musical items therein contained, Miss Alexander sang most acceptably "Abide with me," and "But the Lord is mindful of His own." Rev. A. Turner conducted the service and Mr. Alex. Bell, B.A., delivered an appropriate address. The schoolroom was full to its utmost capacity with a most appreciative congregation, and many requests were urged for a repetition of the service.

The Service was repeated in Templepatrick on Monday evening, 25th October, when a large congregation assembled.

* *

Belfast—1st Church—Very successful Harvest Services, conducted by the Minister (Rev. H. J. Rossington, M.A., B.D.,) were held in the above church on October 10th. Each of the three Services was responsible for a larger attendance and an increased collection, as compared with the corresponding service last year. Appropriate music was rendered by the organist and choir, the latter being augmented, especially for the "Elijah" selections given at night. The Church was beautifully decorated. The flowers, and fruit, and vegetables were afterwards sent to the U.V.F. and Victoria Barracks Hospitals.

ERRATUM.

In the October article on the Sacraments, it was stated that the Lambeth Conference attended a communion called "Mass." Confusion was made with the Anglican-Catholic Conference which met at the same time.

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